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FORWARD DEPLOYED, SEPARATE BRIGADES
AS ROUNDOUT UNITS FOR PARTIAL DIVISIONS

BY

Colonel Clifford G. Willis
United States Army

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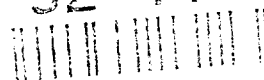
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concept to Congress in a time when it is looking to decrease the size of the defense budget and the number of troops deployed overseas. The findings indicate that because reserve and National Guard units have only 39 days per year available for training, it is impossible to expect them to be able to be ready to deploy in fewer than 60 days from mobilization. Yet, with the change in the threat from global to regional, and with fewer forces deployed overseas, quick response to a crisis becomes more important than in the past. The paper concludes that separate, forward deployed brigades are a better way of responding to the new threat. The drawbacks, although formidable, can be resolved, and it is worth the effort.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

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FORWARD DEPLOYED, SEPARATE BRIGADES
AS ROUNDOUT UNITS FOR PARTIAL DIVISIONS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm pointed out some significant shortcomings in the ability of some of our Reserve forces to mobilize and deploy quickly in time of national emergency. Three National Guard roundout brigades were mobilized for deployment to Southwest Asia during the crisis and none was ever able to deploy. As a result, the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), the 1st Cavalry Division and the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) all had to be filled out with other active Army brigades prior to their deployments. This paper examines the feasibility, as well as the desirability, of utilizing separate, forward deployed brigades as roundout units for the early deploying divisions as an alternative to the National Guard roundout brigades. In addition to improvement in response times, the paper looks at other potential benefits gained with the concept, such as increased forward presence around the world, better training opportunities, and strategic deterrence in potentially unstable areas. Drawbacks to the concept are also examined, to include the increased costs associated with it, the need to negotiate foreign basing rights, and selling the concept to Congress in a time when it is looking to decrease the size of the defense budget and the number of troops deployed overseas. The findings indicate that because reserve and National Guard units have only 39 days per year available for training, it is impossible to expect them to be able to be ready to deploy in fewer than 60 days from mobilization. Yet, with the change in threat from global to regional, and with fewer forces deployed overseas, quick response to a crisis becomes more important than in the past. The paper concludes that separate, forward-deployed brigades are a better way of responding to the new threat. The drawbacks, although formidable, can be resolved, and it is worth the effort.

Introduction

Despite the overwhelming success of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, some significant problems surfaced as a result of the U.S. Army's massive, short-notice response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. One, in particular, was the mobilization and deployment of some of our reserve and National Guard forces. Three divisions--the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), the 1st Cavalry Division, and the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized)--all "bobtail" divisions scheduled to be rounded out with a third brigade from the National Guard, had to be filled with an active component brigade prior to deployment due to the inability of the National Guard brigades to be ready to deploy in time.

Having been a battalion commander in the 1st Infantry Division from December 1988 to June 1991, I had the opportunity to observe, first hand, the problems associated with the roundout concept when the division was alerted to deploy to Saudi Arabia in November 1991 to participate in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Because of the inability of a National Guard brigade to be ready quickly enough to deploy with the division, the "Big Red One" was assigned the 2d Armor Division (Forward), a separate brigade from Garlstadt, Germany, as its roundout unit.

With no advance notice, the 2d Armor Division (Forward) linked up with the 1st Infantry Division in the desert of Saudi

Arabia in late January 1991. Despite never having trained, or associated with each other in any way before, both went into combat together a few weeks later. And the marriage was perfect. The 2d Armor Division (Forward) fought side by side with the two brigades of the "Big Red One" and performed magnificently. Their wartime accomplishments are well documented.¹

My first-hand experience and my opportunity to interview Major General Jerry R. Rutherford, the commander of the 2d Armor Division (Forward) during the war, inspired me to examine the possibility of using forward-deployed, separate brigades, instead of reserve component brigades, as roundout units to support our national military objectives. This paper examines several aspects of the possibility, to include advantages and disadvantages of the concept.

The Problem

Three roundout brigades--the 256th Infantry Brigade from the Louisiana National Guard, the 155th Armor Brigade from the Mississippi National Guard, and the 48th Infantry Brigade from the Georgia National Guard--were mobilized in late November and early December of 1991 for the crisis in the Middle East. None was ever able to deploy. The 48th Brigade received three months of post-mobilization training, the 155th Brigade received four months of training, and the 256th Brigade received five months of

training. Yet, only the 48th Brigade was ever formally validated as being ready for deployment, and that came on the day the war ended, 28 February 1991.²

The brigades' experience has generated much criticism about the viability of the roundout concept. Indeed, General Carl E. Vuono, the then-Army Chief of Staff, tasked the Inspector General of the Army, in early 1991, to formally assess the efficiency of the mobilization and deployment process of the three brigades and identify any deficiencies or weaknesses in the system and outline lessons learned for future planning.³

A number of reasons were cited for the brigades' inability to be certified for deployment and the disparity between the times required for each brigade. One significant reason cited was the fact that the brigades were not mobilized early enough in the crisis. The 24th Infantry Division was deployed in August 1990 yet its roundout brigade, the 48th Infantry Brigade, was not mobilized until 30 November. Likewise, the 1st Cavalry Division also deployed in August and its roundout brigade was not mobilized until 7 December. However, as noted in an in-depth study on the subject performed by the Congressional Research Service, based on the 90 days that the 48th Brigade required to become certified, even if it had been mobilized the same day that the 24th Division was alerted for deployment, it still would not have been ready when the division deployed.⁴

That the other two brigades failed to be certified at all is partially attributable to circumstances beyond their control. The 256th Infantry Brigade was converting from the M113 armored personnel carrier to the M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle and undergoing new equipment training. The 155th Armor Brigade did not initially have adequate training facilities available to it for post-mobilization training. However, the IG report goes on to say that all three units were deficient in the area of readiness and had overstated their actual training readiness level in Unit Readiness Reports.⁵

Another reason frequently cited for why the National Guard brigades did not deploy to Desert Storm was the legal maximum of 180 days placed on the callup of reserve forces by Congress. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, noted in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in November 1990, with the 180 day limit imposed, "after refresher training, there would be too little time left to make it worth while to ship reserves overseas."⁶ Legislation could easily fix this problem. However, this really has no bearing on how quickly a reserve unit can be ready to ship. The fact remains, the soonest a National Guard brigade was ready to deploy was 90 days after notification.

Is the solution then to intensify the reserve's and National Guard's pre-mobilization training? In its conclusions, the Army

Inspector General Report noted that:

"The post-mobilization training process for roundout units can be shortened by realigning current training focus to prescribed training strategies that compliment a deliberately planned post-mobilization training readiness improvement process."

However, the report went on to outline three readiness improvement models, the shortest of which showed a requirement of 50-72 days for a roundout brigade to prepare for deployment, with that number increasing to 68-96 days if the brigade is required to rotate through the National Training Center prior to deployment, the option recommended by the report."

The fact of the matter is, the reserve and National Guard units simply do not have enough time to do all the training that they need to. As General Gordon Sullivan, current Army Chief of Staff, noted in his address to the National Guard Association on 4 September 1991:

"The training time available before callup is insufficient to master the complex and highly perishable skills required....."

Major General Raymond Rees, Director of the Army National Guard, similarly summed it up in a letter to all National Guard commanders recently, stating:

"With only 39 days available for a unit to train each year, there is more to do than can be accomplished in that time."¹⁰

Indeed, the U.S. Army Forces Command's (FORSCOM) new Reserve Component Enhancement Action Plan (RCEAP), termed Operation Bold

Shift, mandates that a reserve units' 39 days of annual training will be devoted exclusively to individual soldier skills and training of platoon and smaller organizations. Company level and higher training will be accomplished entirely after mobilization, and at least 60 days is required to accomplish that training."

Even with fixing the training deficiencies identified in our reserve and National Guard units, and maximizing training opportunities by making facilities and equipment available, a minimum of 60 days is still required from mobilization to deploy a National Guard brigade. This clearly was not soon enough in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

The Changing World

The ongoing changes in both the Army's structure and the threat only serve to intensify the problem. As we downsize the active force by fully one-third, from eighteen divisions to twelve, and cut 245,000 soldiers from the active duty rolls, the importance of our reserves increases. With the diminishing size of the active Army, we will no longer have the luxury of rounding out deploying divisions with other active brigades if our designated reserves are found to be not combat ready, as was done in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Those extra forces simply are not there anymore.

Further, with fewer forces deployed overseas, the timeliness of response of our deploying forces becomes even more critical. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the threat picture for the future is altered significantly. Gone are the days of the United States having four-plus divisions massed across the border from its adversary, capable of withstanding an initial hostile attack and buying time for the mobilization and deployment of reinforcing forces. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm offered a glimpse of the future. Conflicts will be regional rather than global, and increasingly more difficult to predict. Further, we will probably not have benefit of large numbers of forward deployed units to blunt any attack. Warning time will be diminished. Our forces must be able to respond more quickly, to virtually any area of the world and without benefit of prepositioned forces to buy time until reinforcing units can arrive.

For these reasons, reserve and National Guard forces do not seem to be a viable option for filling out our early deploying divisions. As General Sullivan noted in his speech to the National Guard Association:

"Roundouts originated to increase the strength of active divisions for major, protracted combat in Europe. They were not meant to be used as contingency forces for immediate, short duration deployments."¹²

Why not utilize the force structure as it currently is?

Why not just have as many full-up divisions as possible for early deployment and round out the remaining follow-on divisions with reserve and National Guard brigades after those brigades have completed their post-mobilization training? This option would be fine if the United States were going to become an isolationist country again, as some have proposed. But that runs counter to our National Defense Policy of strategic deterrence, forward presence, crisis response, and force reconstitution. Lieutenant General J.H. Binford Peay III, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Plans, notes:

"The U.S. must continue to maintain capable, albeit smaller, forces forward deployed in Europe, Asia, and other areas of vital strategic interest. The presence of these forces may reduce our requirements for rapid reinforcement in many scenarios."¹³

The use of forward deployed brigades would fit this concept perfectly. Granted, we can no longer afford, nor does America want, a half million man Army massed in Europe; but, selectively positioning separate, independent brigades in potential "hot spots" around the world, may serve as a deterrent to the next dictator, who, like Sadaam Hussein, looks covetously across his border for additional land. A forward deployed brigade may not be enough of a force to stop a large, advancing army, but may serve as a sufficient deterrent to a small-time dictator with a minimal force. A brigade, albeit small, located in a dictator's own back yard, serves as a better deterrent to aggression, I believe, than

the mere threat of intervention by a massive U.S. force located thousands of miles away in the United States. A threat certainly did not deter Sadaam Hussein. Perhaps however, if a separate brigade had been present in Kuwait in August 1991, he may well have thought twice before attempting to take Kuwait.

The Benefits: Strategic, Operational and Tactical

In addition to the strategic benefits of fulfilling the forward deployment requirements of our National Security Policy, and the deterrent aspect outlined above, the separate brigade concept also offers numerous tactical and operational advantages.

First, and probably most importantly, the response time to a regional flare-up requiring U.S. forces would be decreased for several reasons. A brigade, albeit small, might be able to respond to a regional skirmish by itself if the incident is minor enough. A brigade could at least take some defensive action until additional forces arrive. This is certainly better than no force present at all at the time of the flare-up. Additionally, the forward deployed brigade, while garrisoned overseas, could prepare the area for future, larger scale operations by building new, or improving existing, airfields, seaports, road networks, and other facilities. In all likelihood, the next area the U.S. is called upon to deploy to will not have the large, modern port and aerial facilities that Saudi Arabia offered. Such a lack of

facilities could greatly constrain our ability to deploy quickly upon arrival in theater.

Similarly, the resident brigade could make logistical preparations for future operations, arranging for such necessities as fuel, food, water and a source for repair parts. The criticality of this issue was highlighted in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, where all those arrangements had to be made after the arrival of our forces. Making the arrangements significantly delayed operations.

Further, if land were available and the host nation was agreeable, storage facilities could be constructed and a division set could be prepositioned in-country. Such prepositioning significantly decreases the response time of our forces and virtually eliminates the need for sea transport for the division. Considering the current tremendous void in cargo ships in both our merchant marines and Navy, this elimination would be a major benefit. Troops could be flown into theater and fall in on their equipment in a matter of hours, as opposed to the weeks required in preparing CONUS-based equipment for overseas movement, shipping, and de-processing on arrival, as was necessary in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The forward deployed brigade would maintain the equipment in the forward deployment area.

Immense training opportunities would open up too. With the equipment in place overseas, U.S. based units could deploy in a simulated combat environment, draw their prepositioned equipment, and train in the area in which they would actually be required to fight. This experience would give units the advantage of being familiar with the terrain and environment in which they may have to fight, thus avoiding the "culture shock" our deploying forces went through in Southwest Asia upon their arrival in theater. Even more importantly, the area in which we fight next may not so closely match the terrain of the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, as did the deserts of Southwest Asia. If the next world crisis is in the Philippines or Panama, the desert warfare-type training offered by the NTC will be of less value. Being able to train on the actual terrain we may need to defend offers a far more realistic environment.

Going a step further, divisions could rotate their two CONUS-based brigades through the forward brigade's area for training, affording the entire division the opportunity to familiarize itself with the region's terrain. This would set up a unit rotational base which has been suggested by Congress in the past (and has recently gained renewed interest) as a way of reducing the cost of keeping forces deployed overseas. Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., Chairman of the Defense Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee has recently proposed such a move for cost cutting purposes.¹⁴ With a six month rotation policy,

accompanied overseas tours could be eliminated, yielding significant savings in the shrinking defense budget while still maintaining overseas military presence.

With all units being able to train at the overseas location, the need for large maneuver areas at stateside installations would be decreased and the demand for additional land, which, due to environmental issues, has become such a politically sensitive issue of late, would be eliminated. While garrisoned in the U.S., units would concentrate on individual and collective training at the battalion level and below, which requires less maneuver area, and focus on brigade and higher level operations when deployed overseas. This would also free up the National Training Center for use by reserve and National Guard forces which are currently precluded from its use due to the full-time requirements of the active components.

Yet another strategic benefit to forward deployment is the added opportunity to practice peacetime engagement in the host country. Our armed forces could be utilized in nontraditional roles such as nation assistance while deployed overseas. As an example, a brigade in Latin America could assist in local drug interdiction efforts. Or, a brigade in an underdeveloped country in the Middle East could assist by building roads or improving port facilities, benefiting both the host nation and ourselves. The possibilities are limitless and such peacetime engagements

could, in themselves, help to win friends and perhaps prevent a future conflict.

Lastly, the forward deployment concept lends itself well to the Chief of Staff, Army's vision of multinational forces in the accomplishment of future missions. As General Sullivan notes in his White Paper of 3 January 1992, the decreasing size of our American armed forces necessitates that we form multinational units with our allies to confront future threats, much as we did with the coalition forces in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.¹⁵ Forward deployed brigades would facilitate in the formation of those units and in participation in combined training with our allies.

The Drawbacks

Certainly however, there are drawbacks to this concept that need to be addressed. And some could be difficult to resolve. Perhaps the single-most difficult issue would be the negotiation of a basing agreement with the potential host nation. National sovereignty has become an extremely important issue to many countries of the world, and they are becoming more and more reluctant to have foreign forces stationed on their soil. The Philippines and Panama are two good examples of this. Despite the continued threat posed by Sadaam Hussein to the Middle East, overtures to a number of countries, to include Saudi Arabia and

Kuwait, have proven fruitless in negotiation of a basing agreement in the region. There is an extreme reluctance to have American forces present there, no matter what the threat. However, if the threat remains, or intensifies, or if we can demonstrate a true peacetime benefit to our presence through nation assistance--such as assisting in rebuilding Kuwait's war-torn infrastructure--we may yet be able to make some inroads in the future. The diplomatic efforts required however will be formidable.

Probably the next most significant obstacle to overcome is cost, especially if the United States must bear the full cost involved, as would be the case in many of the poorer areas of the world such as Latin America. Congress and the American people are clamoring to cut the defense budget even further than the recent significant cuts that have been made, certainly not increase it. To deploy units overseas is an expensive proposition, especially so during the initial deployment, when new facilities would have to be built. Considering the current economic climate in the United States, it would be an extremely difficult program to sell, to say the least. However, as in the case of some of the wealthier countries, such as those of the Middle East, the majority, or all, of the costs involved could be borne by the host nation, particularly for things such as construction of facilities which would revert back to the host nation upon our withdrawal, as we are presently doing in Germany. Or, we could

pursue a cost-sharing program among all the members of the particular coalition involved, as we did in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Creative financing will certainly be required and will not be easily accomplished.

Another significant expense involved in the forward basing concept is the redundancy of requirements that come about in both personnel and equipment. As General Rutherford noted during his interview, having elements of a division in two separate locations necessitates having a complete staff in each location, a sizable increase in personnel requirements.¹⁶ As has been the case for a number of years however, any force structure changes in the Army's organization must be a "zero-sum game." Any increase in a division's size would have to be paid for by a corresponding decrease in some other organization, not an easy task in today's bare-boned Army. There simply is no fat left anywhere in the force from which to cut.

Significant redundancy is necessary in the logistical area as well. Completely stocked and staffed maintenance facilities are required in both locations, an extremely expensive proposition. General Rutherford noted that the budget for a separate brigade such as his is nearly double that of a regular brigade, and personnel authorizations are nearly fifty percent higher.¹⁷ Here again, the only feasible solution to this problem is cost-sharing by the host nation or by the coalition.

Still another potential drawback to the concept is that it is difficult to predict exactly where the threat of the future is. After deploying separate brigades forward, we may very well find that we are no closer to the next flare-up than if we had kept our forces home. This is not a very likely scenario however. By strategically positioning forces in major regions of the world, even if an uprising should occur in an area where we do not have forces physically present, it would still be more beneficial to respond with a brigade deployed nearby. It would certainly be able to respond more quickly than a unit from the United States. Obviously, there is a degree of calculated risk to be taken, however, not a very significant one.

The concept of deploying forces overseas certainly runs counter to the rapidly growing sentiment in the United States to bringing our troops home. The average American no longer perceives a threat to our country, as he did when the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were still in existence. Hence, he no longer sees a need for an armed presence overseas. This desire to bring our troops home is only further fueled by the current state of the economy and Congress' desire to fund much-needed domestic programs with dollars diverted from the defense budget. The threat is far less visible than in the past and, for that reason, far more difficult to sell to the U.S. public. It will take a concerted effort to convince the people and the members of Congress of this need. Fortunately, the burden is not entirely on the military's shoulders. There are a number of organizations

such as The Center For Strategic and International Studies that are attempting to relay that message to the American public.¹⁸

Lastly, there will probably be some resistance from within the Army itself. The concept of rotating units overseas, unaccompanied, will not be very popular; unaccompanied tours never are. Indeed, even General Rutherford favors having a brigade permanently based overseas and rotating individual replacements every three or four years, just as we do now, rather than rotating brigades through every six months, unaccompanied.¹⁹ Certainly what he proposes is more desirable from the family standpoint, but the realities of costs and the mood of the American people and Congress, in my opinion, make this option implausible. The unit rotation policy is also more desirable from the readiness standpoint. Therefore, I believe the Army must shift its focus toward doing business more the way the Marine Corps has always done it; with its families homebased in the United States, and troops rotated overseas for short, unaccompanied tours and then rotated back home.

The Strategic Vision

A new, regionally focused National Military Strategy developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlines five potential regional conflicts which will drive future military planning and budgetary decisions. Among the scenarios is a renewed threat from

Iraq with Sadaam Hussein driving into Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, a potential attack by Communist North Korea into South Korea, an uprising of one of the larger republics of the former Soviet Union against one or more of the smaller former republics, a right-wing coup attempt in Panama, and a coup in the Philippines.²⁰ In testimony recently before the House Armed Services Committee's Defense Policy Panel, the Honorable David M. Abshire, President of the Center For Strategic and International Studies, cited similar potential regional conflicts as the threat of the future, with the two additional scenarios of a possible attack by the Chinese into Taiwan and the possibility of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan.²¹ Based on these scenarios, I envision the United States initially deploying five separate brigades in the areas of South Korea, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Panama. With forces already deployed in Germany and South Korea, only three new basings would need to be negotiated.

Time and space do not allow for a detailed layout of the actual force structure envisioned in this paper, but some characteristics merit mention. I foresee no change in the overall size of the force structure of either the active or reserve forces. The way we build our divisions would shift. The National Guard and reserves will continue to play a vital role, but more with the follow-on divisions that are less crucial in the early phases of a war.

There would be no increase in the number of forces we have deployed overseas either. In fact, the numbers could decrease because the three additional forward-deployed brigades required would come from Germany-based divisions or Korea. The time may be right for further troop cuts in both countries as each country grows stronger and takes a more active role in its own self-defense. In the not too distant future, Germany could conceivably be reduced to one full division and Korea to one brigade. That would allow for a division in Germany and a separate brigade in each other identified region, and still allow for additional overall overseas troop reductions.

Conclusion

As outlined in this paper, I believe that forward deployed, separate brigades are a better alternative to the way we currently round out our early deploying divisions with brigades from the reserve components. Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm demonstrated that reserve forces simply cannot be ready to deploy quickly enough in a crisis, while on the other hand, a separate brigade, heretofore never affiliated with its assigned roundout division, can respond quickly and perform well in combat.

In addition to the response time improvement, separate brigades offer the additional benefits of being able to maintain a forward presence in critical areas of the world, enhance our

strategic deterrence, and increase our ability to respond to a crisis, as required by our latest National Defense Policy. Further, the concept maintains the same level, or even reduces, the number of forces we must deploy overseas, meeting the growing demands of Congress and the American public. There are obstacles to be overcome, but none are insurmountable, and the efforts required to implement the changes outlined can pay large dividends in the future.

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